School Safety in New Mexico and the United States: A Landscape Analysis

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LESC's School Safety Work Plan - 2024

- **June 2024:** Landscape Analysis of School Safety in New Mexico and the United States

- **November 2024:** Panel presentation on school safety best practices; report to the Legislature with policy and budget recommendations

School Safety as a Concept

- Three dimensions:

  Prevention
  - Examples: social emotional learning, anti-bullying programs, threat assessment

  Response
  - Examples: Video cameras, metal detectors, security personnel

  Recovery
  - Examples: Trauma-informed responses, reunification procedures

- A holistic approach to school safety recognizes the role all three aspects play in creating a safe, welcoming learning environment.

- This presentation will place various safety measures and themes into two buckets: **preventative measures** and **physical safety**.

Student Mental Health

- The percentage of children aged 3 to 17 experiencing anxiety or depression has risen in recent years.

- The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated students' mental health challenges.

- Despite reported increases in mental health challenges among U.S. students, educators are uncertain about the capacity of schools to adequately meet these needs.

Sources: 2022 KIDS COUNT Data Book; 2022 NCES School Pulse Panel; 2024 NCES School Pulse Panel

Behavior and Safety

- Educators nationwide have noted increased behavioral challenges and safety issues for students since the onset of the pandemic.

- 84 percent of respondents believed that students are lagging behind in the development of both self-regulation and relationship-building skills.

- EAB survey results also depicted a sharp increase in the amount of physical violence seen in schools since 2018,:
  - 15 percent of respondents observed frequent physical fights between students
  - 7 percent observed physical violence against teachers.
  - In 2022, those percentages increased to 34 percent and 13 percent, respectively.

Hardening of Schools

School safety strategies with clear and consistent evidence bases:
- School climate, social-emotional learning, and anti-bullying programs
- Threat assessment and related screening programs
- Restorative practices/non-exclusionary discipline
- Trauma-informed responses and resilience orientation
- Non-remedial after-school and youth empowerment programs

School safety strategies with developing evidence bases:
- Interpersonal surveillance such as reporting systems
- Active shooter training and other lockdown drills
- School Resource Officers (SROs)
- Door lock policies, signage, and school-focused Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)
- Coordination with law enforcement/first responders
- Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs)

School safety strategies with limited or mixed evidence bases:
- Video cameras, metal detectors, other target hardening measures
- Stop the Bleed/hemorrhage control training
- Armed teachers/staff/security personnel (non-SROs)
- Technology-aided identification/monitoring

Source: National Center for School Safety

A Systems-Based Approach

- Physical security measures on their own are likely insufficient to reduce safety risks for schools and can have adverse impacts on student wellbeing.

- A systems-based approach to physical security recognizes the role of physical measures as one layer of a larger strategy encompassing three key aspects of school safety that build upon and work in tandem with one another:

  1. Prevention
  2. Protection and Mitigation
  3. Response and Recovery

Source: the RAND Corporation

School Climate and Culture

- Federal guidance:
- "A positive school climate promotes respectful, trusting, and caring relationships and open lines of communication."

- School Connectedness and Educator/Student Relationship Building

- Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Education

Source: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), U.S. Department of Justice

Chronic Absenteeism

- New Mexico state law defines chronic absenteeism as missing 10 percent or more of classes or school days, equivalent to two days per month or 18 days in a 180-day school year.

Nationally:

- U.S. Chronic Absence Rate (2021-2022): 29.7 percent.

- Nationally in 2021, 8.6 percent of students reported missing school due to safety concerns.

New Mexico:

- Chronic Absence Rate (2022-2023): 39.2 percent, down from 40.7 percent in 2021-2022.

- The number of high school students skipping school due to safety concerns more than doubled from 2013 to 2021.
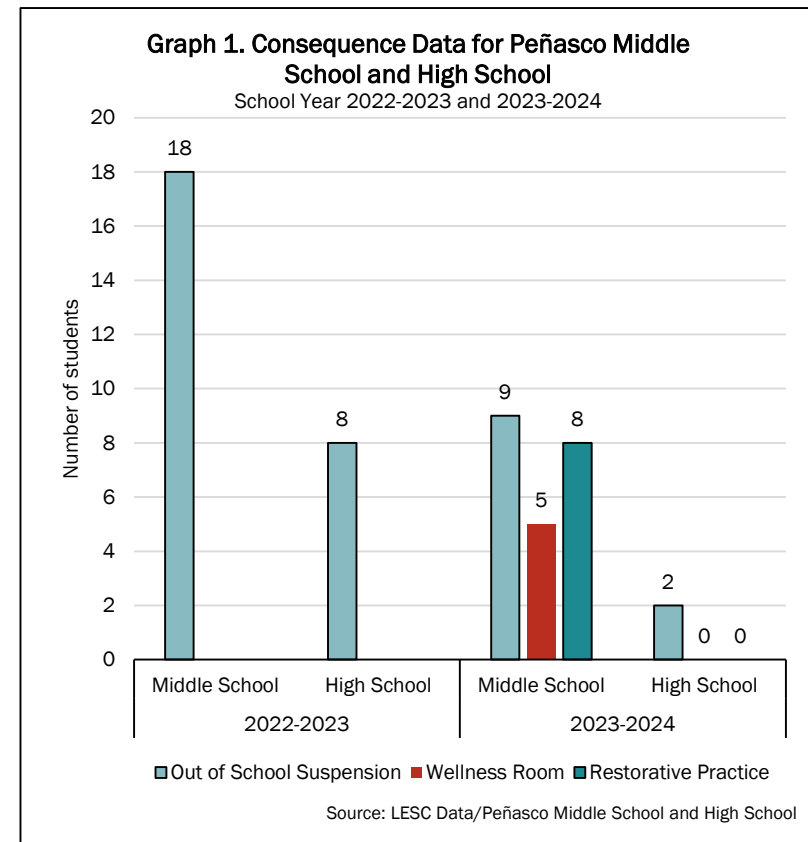
School Discipline: Dashboard

- Nova data collection system (formerly known as the Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System or STARS).

- PED: Student discipline dashboard

- Discipline trends in New Mexico:
  - Research shows restorative and non-exclusionary discipline programs reduce violence at school.

School Discipline: Suspension and Expulsion Data

Peñasco Middle School and High School for SY22-23 and SY23-24

- Out-of-school suspension for the SY22-23
  - 18 middle school students
  - 8 high school students suspended

- By SY23-24 these numbers decreased to:
  - 9 for middle school
  - 2 for high school

- Alternative consequence measures have served 13 middle school students. Specifically:
  - 5 students used wellness rooms
  - 8 students participated in restorative practices
  - No high school students are receiving these intervention services

- $200 thousand appropriation for wellness rooms in both FY24 and FY25

Graph 1. Consequence Data for Peñasco Middle School and High School
School Year 2022-2023 and 2023-2024

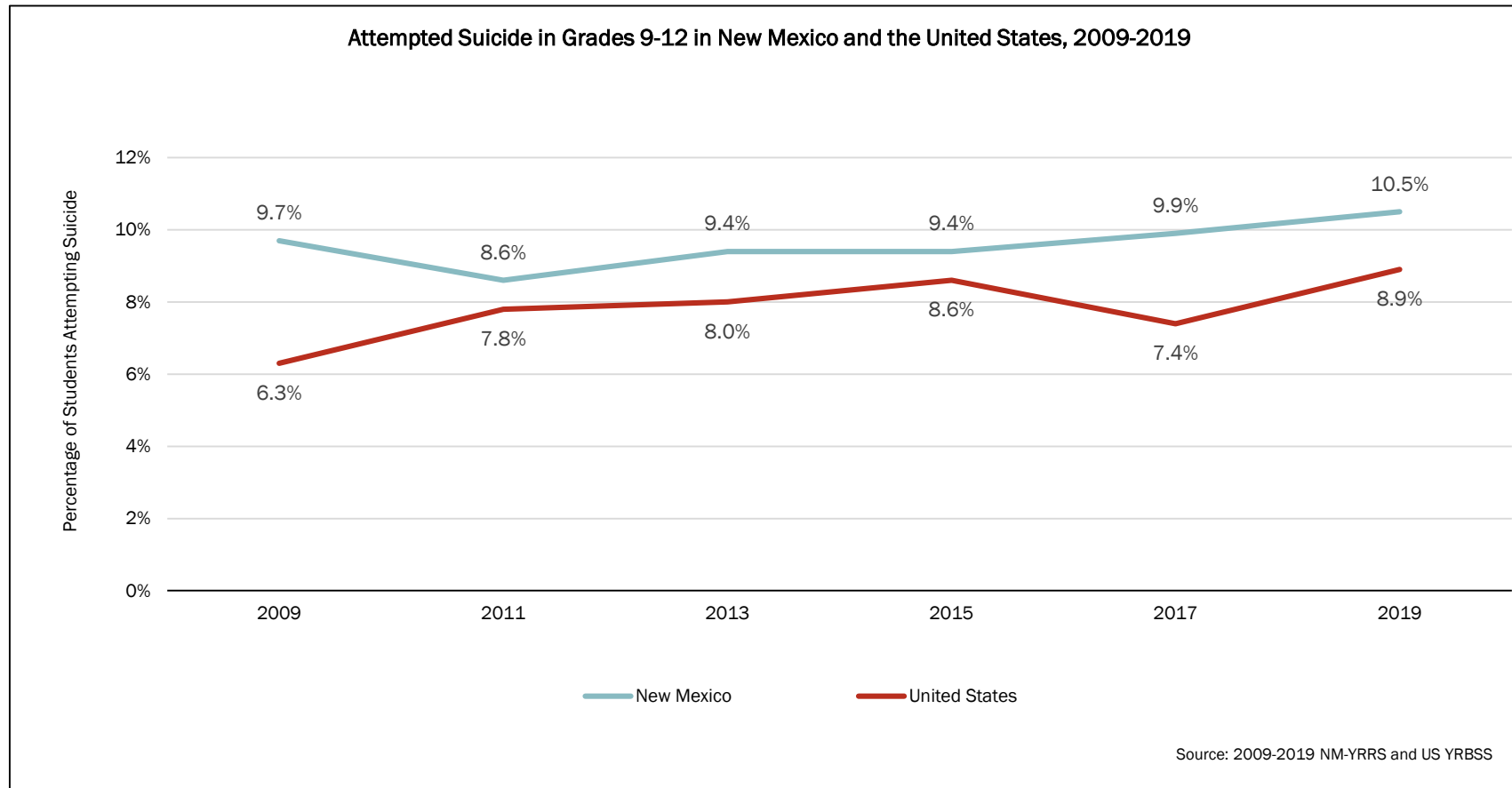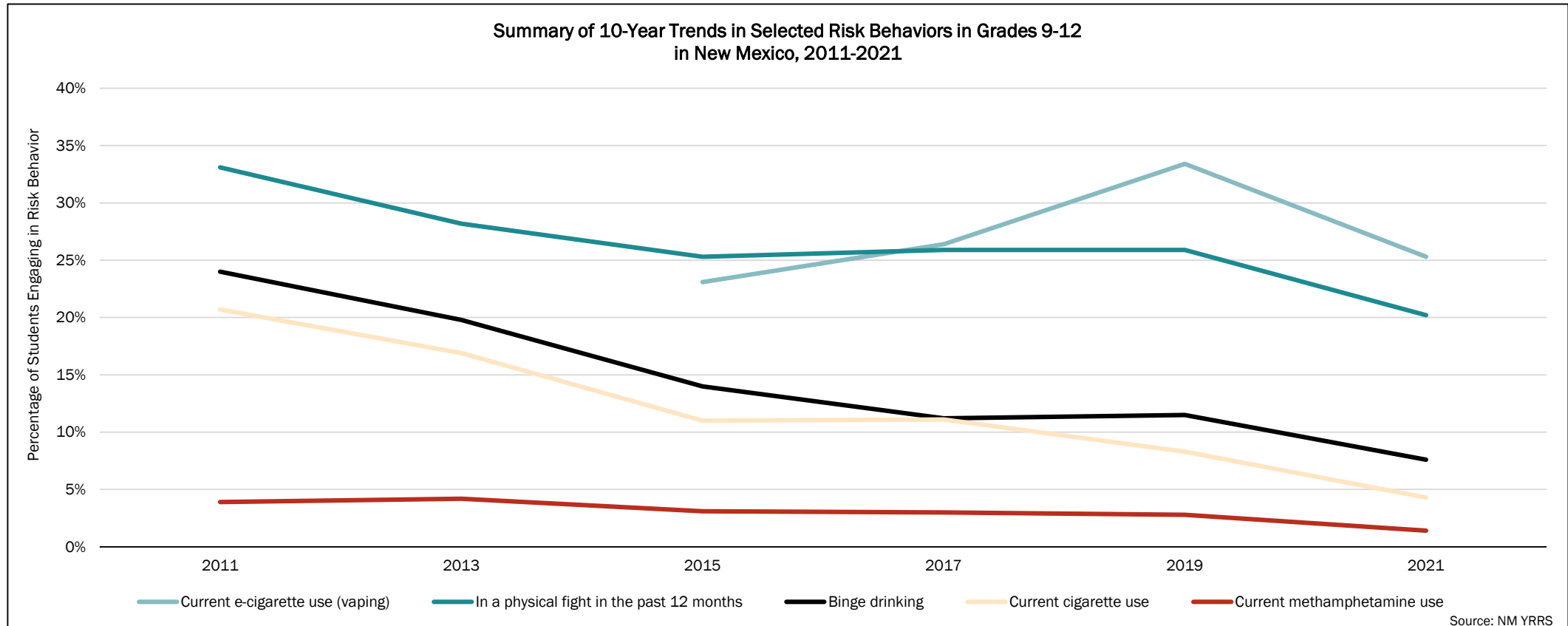Source: LESC Data/Peñasco Middle School and High School

Bullying

- Bullying can have significant consequences for a person's wellbeing in school and beyond.

- From 2019 to 2021, bullying rates decreased on public school property.

- Cyberbullying significantly increased among middle school students.

- Cyberbullying among high school students decreased to 13 percent, a six percent drop from 2019.

- Safe Schools for All Students Act
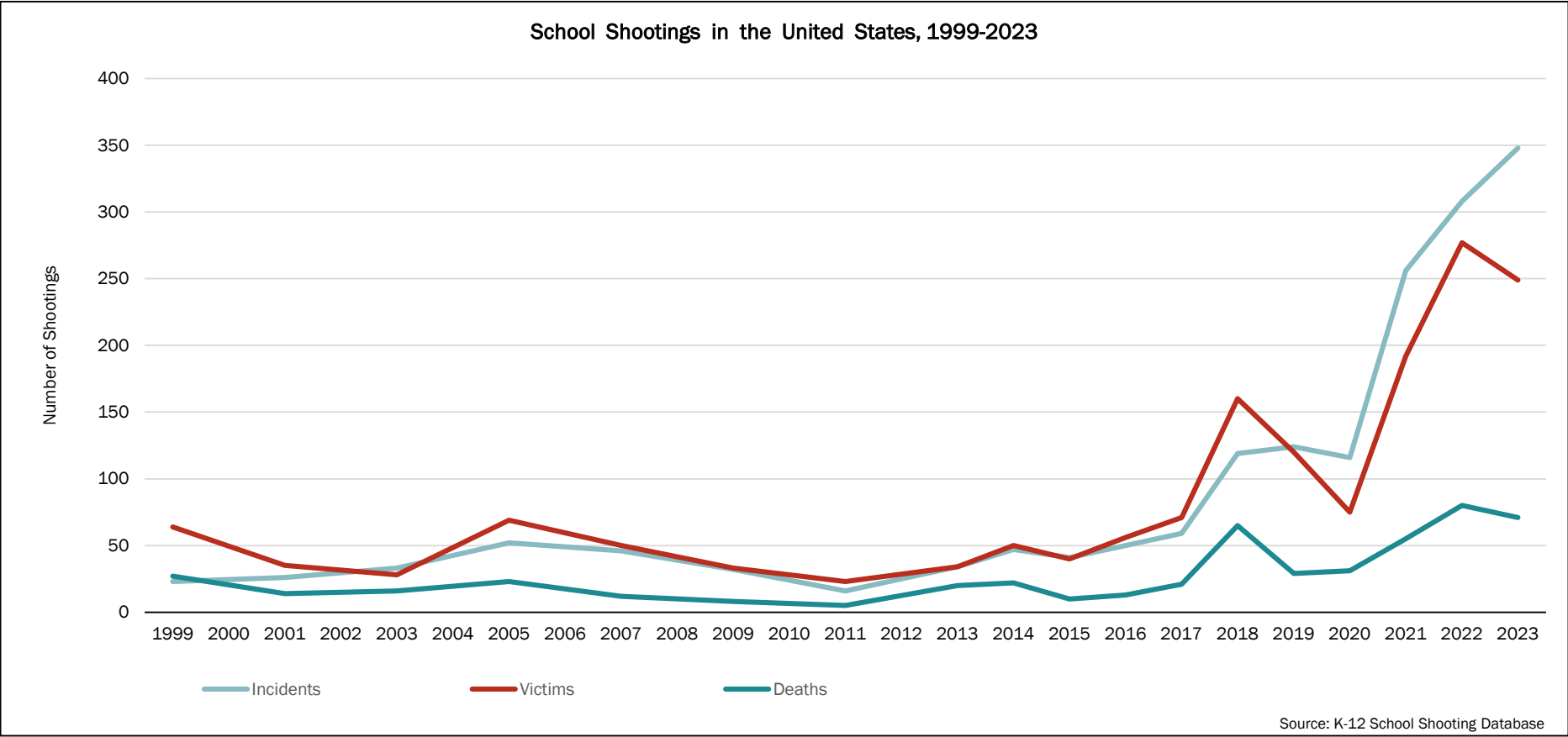
Youth Suicide

Attempted Suicide in Grades 9-12 in New Mexico and the United States, 2009-2019

Source: 2009-2019 NM-YRRS and US YRBSS

Risk and Resilience

Summary of 10-Year Trends in Selected Risk Behaviors in Grades 9-12
in New Mexico, 2011-2021

Percentage of Students Engaging in Risk Behavior

— Current e-cigarette use (vaping)　— In a physical fight in the past 12 months　— Binge drinking　— Current cigarette use　— Current methamphetamine use

Source: NM YRRS

National Trends in School Gun Violence

School Shootings in the United States, 1999-2023

Source: K-12 School Shooting Database

Guns and Other Weapons in New Mexico Schools

Albuquerque Public Schools Firearm Seizures:

- 2021-2022: 10
- 2022-2023: 17
- 2023-2024: 15

Percent Carrying Weapons on School Campuses

- National:
  - 2005: 6.5 percent
  - 2019: 2.8 percent
  - 2021: 3.1 percent
- New Mexico:
  - 2005: 8 percent
  - 2019: 4 percent
  - 2021: 4.2 percent

Guns in New Mexico Schools:

- 2021-2022: 70 firearm infractions
  - Handgun possession - 36
  - Multiple firearms - 6
  - Other firearms possession - 25
  - Rifle/shotgun possession - 3
- 2022-2023: 78 firearm infractions
  - Handgun possession – 52
  - Multiple firearms – 1
  - Other firearms possession – 24
  - Rifle/shotgun possession - 1

Sources: Albuquerque Public Schools Police Department ; U.S. Youth Risk Behavior Survey; New Mexico Public Education Department

School Lockdowns

Shelter-in-Place Incidents by Calendar Year	
Albuquerque Public Schools	
Calendar Year	Shelter-in-Place Incidents
2021*	27
2022	64
2023	61
2024**	34
TOTAL	186

* Data from 2021 begins on July 27, 2021

** Data from 2024 runs up to May 24, 2024

Source: Albuquerque Public Schools Police Department

Capital Outlay

- New Mexico has allocated substantial state funding for statewide public school safety initiatives from FY21 to FY25.

- As a general practice, schools receive additional capital outlay through "junior bill" or direct capital outlay appropriations.

Capital Outlay for Safety Improvements Fiscal Years 2021-2025 (in dollars)						
Appropriations	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	TOTAL
School Bus Cameras	252,400	180,000	132,500	315,000	547,500	1,427,400
School Panic Buttons	1,595,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	5,595,000
School Safety Summits				200,000	200,000	400,000
Security SB9 Distribution (HB505)					35,000,000	35,000,000

Source: LESC Annual Reports 2021 - 2024

Safe Schools Plans

- The school district wellness policy ([NMAC 6.12.6.8](#)) requires that all New Mexico public schools have a safe schools plan (SSP) in place for each school building.

- PED works with schools to ensure compliance but has limited enforcement measures; non-compliance letters are sent to schools without up-to-date SSPs.

- The SSP requirement serves more as a support mechanism for identifying and mitigating school-specific threats than as an accountability measure.

Panic Buttons & Incident Reporting

- Beginning in 2020, funding was allocated to provide panic button systems to all New Mexico public schools and 911 Communication Centers at no cost, with PSCOC initially managing funds until PED took over in 2023.

- The RAVE Panic Button system allows dispatchers to deploy resources, access school layouts, and pinpoint incident locations, enhancing emergency response.

- As of May 2024 (out of over 800 schools):

  - 570 New Mexico schools use the RAVE Panic Button system

  - 244 use other systems

  - 83 have no system in place, with varying levels of responsiveness to adopting RAVE software

A Look Ahead